

"The best decision I made as a mayor was to demolish that freeway. It removed that scar and opened up one of the most important parts of this city for development."

—Mayor Art Agnos (2000)

"I have very mixed feelings. We fought a valiant battle but we lost. The freeway was important for Chinatown, but the consolation is that this vista is just beautiful."

—Rose Pak, Chinese Chamber of Commerce (2000)

"We're going to support whatever they come up with. Our biggest goal is to make it an exciting public area, and obviously that includes planned uses as well as open spaces."

—Sibella Kraus, San Francisco Public Market Collaborative (1996)

"The prevailing attitude among interested parties seems to be that the plan may not be perfect, but it's time to get it moving."

—Clifford Carlsen, San Francisco Business Times (1996)

The Embarcadero

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The mid-Embarcadero Project is one of the world's most successful examples of waterfront transformation and illustrates what a dedicated grassroots group can accomplish. Separated from downtown for more than three decades, San Francisco's northeastern waterfront is now home to a series of parks, public spaces and major civic attractions connected by a palm-lined boulevard, pedestrian promenade and historic streetcar.

The Embarcadero Freeway was controversial from the start. Dividing downtown San Francisco from its historic waterfront, the double-decker elevated freeway was seen by many as a blight on the city. In the 1970s, the City of San Francisco hired ROMA Design Group to develop a master plan for the waterfront, with guidance from a 32-member Citizens Advisory Committee. In 1980, the *Northeastern Waterfront Plan* was completed and called for replacing the Embarcadero Freeway with a surface boulevard. But, in 1986, citizens voted against tearing it down.

Everything changed in 1989 when the Loma Prieta earthquake damaged the freeway. AIA San Francisco used the uncertainty over the freeway's future to build a grassroots coalition of environmental and civic groups to look at options for replacing it. They presented their findings to the state legislature and Mayor Agnos. In 1990, after much dialogue and despite opposition from businesses in Chinatown and Fisherman's Wharf, Mayor Agnos declared that the Embarcadero Freeway would be demolished—a decision reinforced by a 6-5 vote of the Board of Supervisors (San Francisco's city council) in 1991.

Beginning in 1992, a mayor-appointed Citizens Advisory Committee led by AIA architect Clark Manus wrestled with options for replacing the elevated freeway, including a cut-and-cover tunnel and a surface option. Because of scarce funding, the tunnel option fell away and, in 1995, the Board of Supervisors voted to move ahead with the surface roadway. ROMA Design Group, which had participated in evaluating alternatives, drafted a new master plan for the waterfront in 1996. In 2000, the new Embarcadero Boulevard, ferry plaza and pedestrian promenade opened, reconnecting downtown San Francisco with its historic waterfront and spurring the revitalization of nearby neighborhoods.



BASIC FACTS

Size:	About 20 acres, along a 3-mile stretch of waterfront
Location:	Northeast of downtown between Fisherman's Wharf and AT&T Ballpark
Cost:	\$50M for public improvements
Financing:	Federal Hwy Admin: \$21.5M Caltrans: \$3.9M City: \$5.5M (Bonds secured by local sales tax) MUNI: \$18.1M Private Development: \$1.2B+
Owner:	City, subject to the State of California public trust law
Manager:	Port of San Francisco (an enterprise department of the City)
Project Managers:	SF Dept. of Public Transportation, SF Dept. of Public Works
Features:	6-lane palm-lined road, historic streetcar, plaza, fountain, public art, parks, new ferry docks, two 65-foot light cannons, renovated Ferry Building (privately funded).
Permanent Activities:	Farmers market, restaurants, retail, baseball stadium, ferry, office space.



Top: Pedestrian promenade (Neighborhood Parks Council).
Above: Cupid's Span at Rincon Park (Victor Castro).
Left: Renovated ferry building and plaza (San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau).

Key Findings

General:

San Francisco has a similar public process mindset to Seattle, resulting in a long planning process. Like the Alaskan Way Viaduct, the Embarcadero is part of the state's highway system.

Governance:

The state's public trust law makes development of the waterfront costly and unpredictable, acting as a disincentive to investment. Controversy over what uses meet the "public trust" criteria have caused several development projects to fall through. Complicating this issue is the shared veto power held by the City, the State Lands Commission, the State Attorney General's Office and the Bay Conservation & Development Commission.

Finances:

The Port is an "enterprise department" of the City, meaning that its operating and capital budgets are funded solely by revenue its properties generate. This makes it difficult for the Port to invest in its infrastructure or leverage funds to support public-private partnerships for redevelopment.

Design Process:

San Francisco used a two-part decision-making process for the Embarcadero Freeway. First, the Board of Supervisors voted to remove the freeway—before which the state refused to take any action. Five years later, the city and other public agencies voted to replace it with a surface roadway.

The grassroots group assembled and led by AIA San Francisco played a critical role in analyzing design alternatives early on. Leaders of this group were appointed to the Citizens Advisory Committee and worked closely with ROMA Design Group on the roadway configuration and public space elements of the project.

The last minute decision by a few members of the Board of Supervisors to alter ROMA's design for the plaza was seen as a politically expedient, but ill-advised. Grassroots groups acquiesced to the new design, because they still saw it as a massive improvement over existing conditions.

The final design decision was made by the 11 members of the Board of Supervisors. However, prior to the Board's vote, recommendations for the Embarcadero's design were made by a Citizens Advisory Committee and several city commissions. In addition, public hearings provided opportunities for members of the general public to voice their opinions. This approach enabled a broad array of people to provide input on the Embarcadero's design, while limiting decision-making authority to a small group.

Programming:

The privately funded renovation of the Ferry Building, construction of AT&T Park and redevelopment of South Beach have all contributed to the success of the Mid-Embarcadero by helping to activate the waterfront.

TIMELINE

1959	• Elevated Embarcadero Freeway opens, amid "freeway revolt."
1965	• San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) created as a state agency with permitting jurisdiction for waterfront.
1975	• BCDC and Port Commission adopt <i>Special Area Plan</i> for the waterfront.
1980	• City and ROMA Design Group complete <i>Northeastern Waterfront Plan</i> , under guidance of a 32-member citizens advisory committee.
1986	• Voters reject a ballot measure to demolish the Embarcadero Freeway.
1989	• Loma Prieta earthquake heavily damages the Embarcadero Freeway.
1990	• Mayor Art Agnos calls for the Embarcadero Freeway to be removed. • AIA-led grassroots group examines roadway and public space options for Embarcadero and northeastern waterfront. • Voters approve Proposition H, banning the construction of hotels on the piers and requiring a <i>Waterfront Land Use Plan</i> be developed.
1991	• San Francisco Board of Supervisors votes 6-5 to remove Embarcadero. • Demolition of the Embarcadero Freeway begins.
1992	• Major Frank Jordan appoints a Citizens Advisory Committee for the Embarcadero Project.
1996	• ROMA Design Group presents Urban Design Concept (master plan) for the mid-Embarcadero to the Citizens Advisory Committee. • San Francisco Board of Supervisors and the Port, Planning, Art, Redevelopment, Parking & Traffic, Recreation & Park, and Public Transportation commissions approve ROMA's plan. • Board of Supervisors, with support from Mayor Brown, overrides citizens committee and several city commissions by calling for change in project design to build plaza in middle of the Embarcadero roadway. • Bay Conservation & Development Commission, Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the California Transportation Commission approve revised plan for roadway.
1997	• The Port Commission adopts the <i>Waterfront Land Use Plan</i> , prepared with assistance from the citizens' Waterfront Plan Advisory Board.
1998	• Groundbreaking on the mid-Embarcadero project.
2000	• The Embarcadero Boulevard is complete; streetcars begin running on the Embarcadero between downtown and Fisherman's Wharf. • Harry Bridges Plaza opens in roadway in front of the Ferry Building. • ROMA Design Group and the City win 2000 AIA Honor Award for Regional and Urban Design for the Mid-Embarcadero project.
Early 2000s	• A series of waterfront development projects are halted by City and public opposition.
2003	• The renovated Ferry Building opens.
2006	• San Francisco Embarcadero Waterfront Historic District established.



One of the vintage streetcars that traverse the Embarcadero drops passengers at the Ferry Building (San Francisco Chronicle/Michael Macor).

The Embarcadero

FINISHED PROJECTS

1 SBC PARK: The \$357 million home of the San Francisco Giants opened in 2000 with a new sort of public amenity: a walkway along McCovey Cove that allows glimpses of the action through part of the right-field fence.

5 GAP TOWER: This 15-story tower clad in brick and limestone opened in 2001 as headquarters for the Gap clothing chain. A portion of the site was once covered by ramps leading to the Embarcadero Freeway.

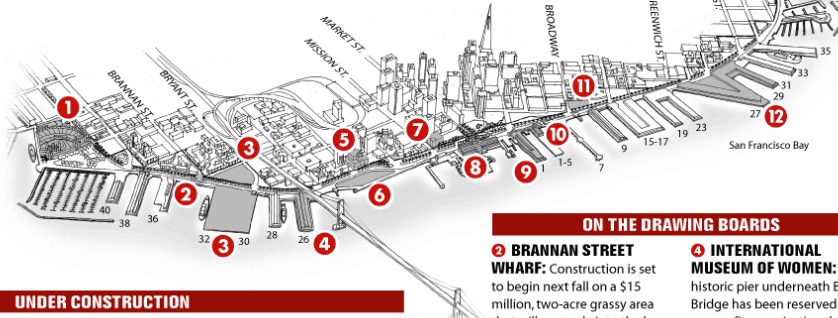
6 RINCON PARK: A two-acre open space built in conjunction with Gap headquarters across the street opened last year. It includes one of city's largest sculptures, a fiberglass bow-and-arrow, and two restaurant sites.

7 HOTEL VITALE: Joie de Vivre Hospitality, a local boutique hotel operator, will manage this new eight-story, 199-room hotel when it opens next spring on what formerly was a bus storage yard.

3 FERRY BUILDING: The venerable landmark reopened last year after a \$100 million makeover that placed food-oriented shops at ground level, offices above and a public walkway along the bay.

9 PIER 1: A \$40 million renovation completed in 2001 turned this former warehouse into office space. The lobby includes a historic display about the waterfront.

10 PIER 45: The Port of San Francisco in 1994 used \$7.6 million in earthquake repair funds as the basis for a \$13.6 million upgrade for the two waterside sheds that house the city's main fish processing facilities.



UNDER CONSTRUCTION

3 Pier 30-32: The 22-story residential tower inland should open by the spring of 2006. The largest piece of the project sits across the street, where plans call for the 13-acre pier to be transformed into a cruise terminal accompanied by commercial space. Construction on the terminal isn't likely to start before 2007, however.

10 PIER 1 1/2, 3 and 5: Three historic bulkhead buildings are being renovated for office space and restaurants, with public walkways and a boat dock. The target opening date is spring 2006.

ON THE DRAWING BOARDS

2 BRANNAN STREET WHARF: Construction is set to begin next fall on a \$15 million, two-acre grassy area that will protrude into the bay. Part of the funding will come from the sales of the Pier 30-32 condominiums.

11 HOTEL: Inland lots on Broadway at the Embarcadero are the site of a proposed six-story hotel with roughly 260 rooms and a three-story parking garage. The developer is Stanford Hospitality. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2006.

4 INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN: A historic pier underneath Bay Bridge has been reserved for a nonprofit organization that hopes to open a museum in 2008 — but first must raise \$120 million.

12 PIERS 27-31: The port in 2001 selected developer Mills Corp. to turn a 19-acre site into a recreation-focused project with three acres of public open space, but Mills' emphasis on office and retail space has brought neighborhood opposition.



Clockwise from top left: Map (San Francisco Chronicle). San Francisco Giants at AT&T Ballpark (San Francisco Diary Star). Streetcar on Embarcadero (Ingrid Taylor). Renovation of historic Pier One (Nibbi Bros., Inc.). Fountain at Justin Herman Plaza (Ron Niebrugge). Ferry Plaza Farmers Market (Project for Public Spaces). San Francisco Bay ferry (Ingrid Taylor). Embarcadero Holiday Ice Rink at Justin Herman Plaza (California Outdoor Roller Sports Association).